

Copies to: Berkner, Goldbl g, Hartline

STANFORD UNIVERSITY

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Palo Alto

DEPARTMENT OF GENETICS  
School of Medicine

October 26, 1959

Dear Dr. Odishaw:

It was a pleasure to meet you at the past meeting of the Space Science Board, and to join in its deliberations.

It was too bad that we could not find time to get together for some preparatory discussions concerning the man-in-space program, but I hope something can be done along these lines in time for the next meeting of the Board. I can of course readily perceive some of the complex issues, not all relating to the Board's interests, which attach to this program. However, I believe that it would be both futile and irresponsible for us to attempt to conceal the impatience of many U.S. scientists with this program, or perhaps more accurately with the popular image of it. As you know, Leo Goldberg's subcommittee has already formally reported its conclusion that it could find no scientific justification to warrant support of a manned space platform, and this reaction was shared by all of the Board members (and scientists throughout the country) with whom I have discussed this point. On the other hand, "man-in-space" is almost universally confounded with our national program in space science. This confusion is, I believe, largely responsible for the remarkable disinterest exhibited by the majority of scientists (outside fields related to aerology) for what should be one of the outstanding scientific challenges in human history.

Dr. Dryden's candor was refreshing and commendable; however, we must have a continuing responsibility to transmit the views of the scientific community to the administration. Furthermore, we must solve the problem of dispelling the confusion between space science and the other aspects of space exploration which are not within the Board's immediate province. The wisdom of pressing these views more urgently, or more publicly, is debatable but it is, I believe, one of the Board's most pressing problems in its task of long-range criticism. We may ultimately face a most awkward situation if a congressional committee elicits testimony of a long held critical attitude which had, for any reason, been quieted. The tensions of an election year are approaching, but they can add only some additional urgency to the moral necessity for complete candor in our own evaluation of space programs.

These questions can properly be deferred to the next meeting of the Board. However, may I make a suggestion that requires prompt action, namely to take full advantage of the publication of Science-in-Space to stress the point that Dr. Berkner had made at the meeting: the three objectives of national prestige, practical application (military and civil), and scientific research must all be taken account of in the space program as formulated by the national space council. The volume itself will then accentuate the positive accomplishments and aspirations of science in space without overreaching the role of the SSB by criticising other aspects. That the special role of the SSB concerns space science perhaps deserves some stress. These general remarks perhaps should go in a preface, a more detailed account of the history and organization of space operations going into the concluding chapter.

Yours cordially,

Joshua Lederberg